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Editorial: Mental health and learning disabilities research and practice

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Editorial

It is with great pleasure that I write this editorial for "Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Research and Practice." This special issue concentrates solely on topics and themes from research and practice identified as of crucial importance by those with an interest, (both personal and professional), in the issues and challenges faced by people with learning / intellectual disabilities and those who work in those services.

This edition of the journal hopes to reflect the breadth and depth of work currently being undertaken in the learning / intellectual disability field and contains articles which are based on empirical research and/or on reviews of literature. This special issue features an interesting range of topics including studies carried out in health, education and residential service settings and theoretical discussions about serious crime, rights to relationships including sexual relationships, and secondary handicap.

Wood et al comment upon a qualitative study undertaken to examine a sample of service users' views about living in a secure hospital setting. The results offer some useful insights about the experiences of living in secure learning disability environments.

Skellern and Lovell discuss the findings of a study conducted to discover more about the reporting of violent incidents incurred by learning disability nurses in their work. The findings confirm beliefs that discrepancies exist between actual and reported incidents.

Read and Read publish the second of a series of three review articles about learning disability and serious crime. This review looks at the relationship between learning disability and fire setting (or arson).

Tilly presents the conclusions of an exploratory study looking at some of the social disadvantages in daily living experienced by people with mild learning disabilities. The findings articulate the individual problems and social barriers encountered by the sample group.

Ferguson et al detail a study which drew attention to the need for professionals to understand the mental health needs of young people with profound learning disabilities and autistic spectrum disorder in residential special schools. The findings call for an improvement in provision.

Skea outlines the results of a small study sampling the quality of life experiences of a group of people with learning disabilities living in private residential homes. The study explains the use of the Life Experience Checklist.

Garbutt discusses the rights of people with learning disability to have sex and relationships. This article examines the concerns of parents.

Cruise et al discuss research that aimed to explore the changes in self esteem following the placement of children with learning disabilities in specialist provision in the USA. The conclusion adds to the discussions about specialist school provision.

Adams outlines a study about the value of the use of pedometers and dietary advice for adults with learning disability. The conclusion reinforces the benefits to health and fitness experienced by a group of learning disability service users.

Jones et al discuss the evidence base for “secondary handicap” encountered by people with learning disability who use services. The review argues for more discussion.

The editorial board hope you enjoy this Special Issue and find the content both interesting and thought provoking. We hope that many of the articles will promote discussion and that some of our readership may wish to submit their own articles in response to the issues raised here. We thank you for your continued support for “Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Research and Practice.”

Dr Su Shaw - Editorial Lead